

PRACTICE OF CONCENTRATION - SWAMI SIVANANDHA

Attention

You must evince good interest in the practice of concentration. Then only your whole attention will be directed towards the object upon which you wish to concentrate. There can be really no concentration without a remarkable degree of interest and attention shown by the practitioner. You must, therefore, know what these two words mean.

Attention is steady application of the mind. It is focussing of consciousness on some chosen object. Through attention you can develop your mental faculties and capacities. Where there is attention, there is also concentration. Attention should be cultivated gradually. It is not a special process. It is the whole mental process in one of its aspects.

Perception always involves attention. To perceive is to attend. Through attention you get a clear and distinct knowledge of objects. The entire energy is focussed on the object towards which attention is directed. Full and complete information is gained. During attention all the dissipated rays of the mind are collected. There is effort or struggle in attention. Through attention a deeper impression of anything is made in the mind. If you have good attention, you can attend to the matter in hand exclusively. An attentive man has very good memory. He is very vigilant and circumspect. He is nimble and alert.

Attention plays a very great part in concentration. It is the basis of the will. When it is properly guided and directed towards the internal world for the purpose of introspection, it will analyse the mind and illumine very many astounding facts for you.

Attention is focussing of consciousness. Attention (Avadhana) plays a conspicuous part in concentration. It is one of the signs of trained will. It is found in men of strong mentality. It is a rare faculty. Brahmacharya wonderfully develops this power. A Yogi who possesses this faculty can even fix the mind on an unpleasant object for a very long time. It is easy to fasten the mind on an object which the mind likes best. Attention can be cultivated and developed by persistent practice. All the great men of the world who have achieved greatness have risen up through this faculty.

Throw your entire attention into whatever you happen to be doing at the moment. Practise attention on unpleasant tasks from which you have been shrinking before on account of their unpleasantness. Throw interest upon uninteresting objects and ideas. Hold them on before your mind. Interest will slowly manifest. Many mental weakness will vanish. The mind will become stronger and stronger.

The force wherewith anything strikes the mind, is generally in proportion to the degree of attention bestowed upon it. Moreover the great art of memory is attention; inattentive people have bad memories.

The human mind has the power of attending to only one object at a time, although it is able to pass from one object to another with a marvellous degree of speed, so rapidly in fact, that some have held that it could grasp several things at a time. But the best authorities, eastern and western, hold to the "single idea" theory as being correct. It agrees with one's daily experience also.

If you analyse carefully the mental functions or operations, no one process can be singled out and called attention. It is not possible to separate attention as a distinct function. You observe something; therefore you are attentive.

Attention belongs to every state of consciousness and is present in every field of consciousness. An attentive student in the spiritual path can do hearing (Sravana) of the Srutis in an efficient manner. The military officer says "attention," and the soldier is ready with his gun to carry out his behests. An attentive soldier alone can hit the mark. No one can get success either in temporal or spiritual pursuits without attention.

There are Yogis who can do eight or ten or even hundred things at a time. This is not strange. The whole secret lies in the fact that they have developed their attention to a remarkable degree. All the great men of the world do possess this faculty in varying degrees.

Attention is of two kinds, viz., external attention and internal attention. When the attention is directed towards external objects, it is called external attention. When it is directed internally within the mind upon mental objects and ideas, it is known as internal attention.

There are again two other kinds of attention viz., voluntary attention and involuntary attention. When the attention is directed towards some external objects by an effort of the will, it is called voluntary attention. When you have an express volition to attend to this or that, it is called voluntary attention. The man understands why he perceives. Some deliberate intention, incentive, goal or purpose is definitely involved. Voluntary attention needs effort, will, determination and some mental training. This is cultivated by practice and perseverance. The benefits derived by the practice of attention are incalculable. Involuntary attention is quite common. This does not demand any practice. There is no effort of the will. The attention is induced by the beauty and attractive nature of the object. Individuals perceive without knowing why and without observed instruction. Young children possess this power of involuntary attention to a greater degree than grown up people.

If a man is not observant, he is not attentive. If he observes something, he is said to be attentive. Intention, purpose, hope, expectation, desire, belief, wish, knowledge, aim, goal and needs serve to determine attention. You will have to note carefully the degree, duration, range, forms, fluctuations and conflicts of attention.

There is great attention, if the object is very pleasing. You will have to create interest. Then there will be attention. If the attention gets diminished, change your attention to another pleasant object. By patient training you can direct the mind to attend to an unpleasant object also by creating interest. Then your will will grow strong.

If you closely watch, you will note that you observe different objects at different times. This perception of now one object and now another, when the physical conditions are constant, is known as fluctuation of attention. Attention is changing. The objects themselves change or fluctuate but there is no fluctuation in the observing individual himself. The mind has not been trained to bear prolonged attention. It gets disgusted through monotony and wants to run towards some other pleasing object. You may say, "I am going to attend to one thing only," but you will soon find that even though you attempt very hard, you suddenly perceive something else. The attention wavers.

Interest develops attention. It is difficult to fix the mind on an uninteresting object. When a professor is lecturing, when the subject is abstract and metaphysical, many people leave the hall quietly

because they cannot attend to a subject which is not interesting. But if the same professor sings and tells some interesting and thrilling stories, all people hear him with rapt attention. There is pindrop silence. Lecturers should know the art of attracting the minds of hearers. They will have to change the tone to talk with force and emphasis. They will have to watch the audience and see whether they are attentive or not. They will have to change the subject-matter for a short while and bring in some nice stories and suitable illustrations. They will have to look at the hearers directly in their eyes. So many things are necessary if one wants to become a successful lecturer, if one wants to make the hearers attentive.

Napoleon, Gladstone, Arjuna and Jnanadeva had all wonderful power of attention. They could fix their minds on any object. All scientists and occultists possess attention to a remarkable degree. They cultivate it by patient, regular and systematic practice. A judge and a surgeon can get positive success in their respective professions only if they are endowed with the power of attention to a high degree.

When you do any work, plunge yourself in it. Forget yourself. Lose the self. Concentrate upon the work. Shut out all other thoughts. When you do one thing, do not think of any other thing. When you study one book, do not think of any other book. Fix the mind there steadily like the arrow-maker who had no consciousness of his surroundings. Eminent scientists are so busy and attentive in their experiments and researches in their laboratories that they forget to take food even for days together. Once a scientist was very busy at his work. His wife who was living in another district had a serious calamity. She came running up to him to the laboratory with profuse tears in her eyes. Strange to say, the scientist was not a bit agitated. He was so very attentive at his work that he even forgot that she was his own wife. He said, "Madam! weep for some more time. Let me make chemical analysis of your tears."

Once some gentleman invited Sir Isaac Newton for dinner. Newton repaired to his host's bungalow and took his seat in the drawing room. The gentleman forgot all about Newton, took his dinner and retired to his bed. Newton was amusing within himself very absorbedly on some important point of science. He did not stir from his seat. He forgot all about his dinner and remained in the same chair like a statue for a long time. The next morning the host saw Newton in the drawing-room and then only remembered his having invited him for dinner. He felt sorry for his forgetfulness and apologised to Sir Isaac in a meek voice.

What a wonderful power of attention Sir Isaac Newton had! All geniuses possess this power to an infinite degree.

According to Prof. James we attend to things because they are very interesting. But Prof. Pillsbury is of the opinion that things are interesting because we attend to them or because we are likely to attend to them. We do not attend to them if they are not interesting.

By constant practice and ever-renewed effort of attention a subject that, in the beginning, was dry and uninteresting may become full of interest when you master it and learn its meaning and its issues. The power of concentrating your attention on the subject may become stronger.

When a great misfortune has befallen you, or when you pass in review a certain course of conduct in order to find out the cause of failure, it may take possession of your mind to such a degree that no effort of the will can make you cease from thinking over it. An article has to be written, a book is in the process of preparation; the work is carried on even if there is loss of sleep, and you are unable to tear yourself away from it. The attention which began voluntarily has taken entire hold of the field of consciousness.

If you possess strong power of attention, anything that the mind receives will be deeply impressed. An attentive man only can develop his will. A mixture of attention, application and interest can work wonders. There is no doubt of this. A man of ordinary intellect with highly developed attention can turn out more work than a highly intellectual man who has a poor attention. Failure in anything is mainly due to lack of attention. If you attend to one thing at a time, you will get profound knowledge of that subject in its various aspects. The ordinary untrained man of the world generally attends to several things at a time. He allows many things to enter the gates of his mental factory. That is the reason why he has a clouded or turbid mind. There is no clarity of thought. He cannot do the process of analysis and synthesis. He is bewildered. He cannot express his ideas clearly, whereas the disciplined man can attend to a subject exclusively as long as he likes. He extracts full and detailed information about one subject or object and then takes up another. Attention is an important faculty of a Yogi.

You cannot attend to two different objects at a time. Mind can do only one thing at a time. Because it moves with such a tremendous velocity

backwards and forwards, you think that the mind can attend to several objects or things at a time. You can only see or hear at a time. You cannot see and hear at the same time. But this law is not applicable to a developed Yogi. A developed Yogi can do several things at a time because his will is not separate from the Cosmic Will which is all-powerful.

Concentration in Every Walk of Life

Concentration is a very important qualification for a beginner in the spiritual path. Concentration is required not only in the spiritual path but also in every walk of life. A man without concentration is a failure in life.

Concentration in a spiritual sense means the one-pointedness of the mind. It is the fixing of one's mind on the Ishta Devata or the deity of one's choice. To attain concentration you should drive off all useless thoughts of the world. You must be entirely free from all base desires of a worldly nature. You should substitute divine thoughts in their stead.

Meditation follows concentration. Samadhi follows meditation. Jivanmukti state follows the attainment of Nirvikalpa Samadhi which is free from all thoughts of duality. Jivanmukti leads to emancipation from the wheel of birth and death. Therefore concentration is the first and foremost thing a Sadhaka or aspirant should acquire in the spiritual path.

Every little act demands concentration and your whole-hearted attention. If you want to pass a thread through the eye of the needle you must remove all fibres that are disjointed. Then you must make it a single fibre and with great care and one-pointed thought pass the thread into the needle.

When you climb a mountain or get down a steep descent you will have to be very careful. Otherwise you will have a slip and fall into the deep abyss below. When you ride a bicycle, you talk to your friends on the road, a motor-car will dash against you from behind. If you are a bit absent-minded when you walk on the road, you will strike against a stone and fall down. A careless barber will cut the nose of his customer. A careless washerman will burn the clothes of his master. A sleepy aspirant will dash his head against the wall or fall down

prostrate on the ground. Therefore you must develop attention. Attention leads to concentration.

Fix your mind on the work at hand. Give your complete heart and soul to it. Let it be even a small work like peeling off the skin on a plantain fruit or squeezing a lemon. Never do anything haphazardly. Never take your meals in haste. Be calm and patient in all your actions. Never arrive at hasty conclusions. Never do a thing in haste. No work can be done successfully without calmness and concentration. Those who have attained success and become great have all possessed this indispensable virtue.

You will be successful in every attempt. You will never meet with failure if you can do your work with perfect attention and concentration. When you sit for prayers and meditation never think of your office-work. When you work in the office never think of the child who is sick or any other household work. When you take bath do not think of games. When you sit for meals do not think of the work that is pending in the office. You must train yourself to attend to the work on hand with perfect one-pointedness. You can easily develop your will-power and memory. Concentration is the master-key to open the gates of victory. If an ordinary man takes one hour to do a work, a man of good concentration will accomplish it in half an hour with better efficiency than the former. You will become a mighty man.

You must know very well the science of relaxation of the mind. You must be able to eliminate all other thoughts from the mind. You must think of rest only. You should consider yourself as if you were dead. Mentally repeat the names of the Lord and think of the Ananda aspect of His attribute. You will not have dreams. You will rest in blissful sleep. You will be refreshed very easily. Even if you sleep for two hours you would feel quite refreshed.

Gist of Yoga of Concentration

It is very difficult to say where concentration ends and meditation begins. Meditation follows concentration. Purify the mind first through the practice of Yama and Niyama. Then take to the practice of Dharana. Concentration without purity is of no use.

Concentration is steadfastness of mind. If you remove all causes of distraction, your power of concentration will increase. A true

Brahmachari who has preserved his Virya will have powerful concentration. Attention plays a prominent part in concentration. He who has developed his power of attention will have good concentration. You should be able to visualise very clearly the object of concentration even in its absence. You must call up the mental picture in a moment's notice. If you have good practice in concentration you can do this without difficulty. He who has gained success in Pratyahara (abstraction) by withdrawing the Indriyas from the various objects will have good concentration. You will have to march in the spiritual path step by step, stage by stage. Lay the foundation of Yama (right conduct), Niyama, Asana (posture), Pranayama and Pratyahara to start with. The superstructure of Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi will be successful then only.

Asana is Bahiranga Sadhana (external); Dhyana is Antaranga Sadhana (internal). When compared with Dhyana and Samadhi, even Dharana is Bahiranga Sadhana. He who has steady Asana and has purified Yoga-Nadis and the Pranamaya Kosha (vital sheath) through Pranayama will be able to concentrate easily. You can concentrate internally on any of the seven plexus or Chakras or centres of spiritual energy viz., Muladhara, Svadhishthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha, Ajna and Sahasrara, or on the tip of the nose, or on the tip of the tongue or externally on the picture of any Devata, Hari, Hara, Krishna or Devi. You can concentrate on the 'tik-tik' sound of a watch or on the flame of a candle, or on a black point of a wall, or on a pencil or rose flower or any pleasing object. This is concrete concentration (Sthoola). There can be no concentration without something upon which the mind may rest. The mind can be fixed easily on a pleasing object such as jasmine flower, mango or orange or a loving friend. It is difficult to fix the mind in the beginning on any object which it dislikes such as faecal matter, cobra, enemy, ugly face, etc. Practise concentration till the mind is well established in the object of concentration. When the mind runs away from the object of concentration, bring it back again and again to the object. Lord Krishna says in the Gita: "Yato yato nischarati manas-chanchalam-asthiram, Tatastato niyamyaitad-atmanyeva vasam nayet-As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the Self."

If you want to increase your power of concentration, you will have to reduce your worldly activities (Vyavahara-Kshaya). You will have to observe Mouna (vow of silence) also for two hours daily. A man whose mind is filled with passion and all sorts of fantastic desires can hardly

concentrate on any object even for a second. His mind will be jumping like a balloon. Regulate and master the breath. Subdue the senses and fix the mind on any pleasing object. Associate the ideas of holiness and purity with the object.

You can concentrate on the space between the two eyebrows (Trikuti). You can concentrate on the mystic sounds (Anahata Dhvani) that you hear from your right ear. You can concentrate on 'Om' picture. The picture of Lord Krishna with flute in hand and the picture of Lord Vishnu with conch, discus, mace and lotus are very good for concentration. You can concentrate on the picture of your Guru or any saint. Vedantins try to fix the mind on Atman, the Inner Self. This is their Dharana.

Dharana is the Sixth stage or limb of Ashtanga Yoga or Raja Yoga of Patanjali Maharshi. In Dharana you will have only one Vritti or wave in the mind-lake. The mind assumes the form of only one object. All other operations of the mind are suspended or stopped. He who can practise real concentration for half or one hour will have tremendous psychic powers. His will also will be very powerful.

When Hatha Yogis concentrate their minds on Shadadhara or the six supports (the Shat-Chakras), they concentrate their minds on the respective presiding Devatas also, viz., Ganesha, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Isvara and Sadasiva. Control the breath through Pranayama. Subdue the Indriyas through Pratyahara. And then fix the mind either on Saguna or Nirguna Brahman. According to the Hatha Yogic School, a Yogi who can suspend his breath by Kumbhaka for 20 minutes can have very good Dharana. He will have a very tranquil mind. Pranayama steadies the mind, removes Vikshepa (distraction) and increases the power of concentration. Those who practise Khechari Mudra by cutting the frenum lingua and lengthening the tongue and fixing it in the hole beyond the palate by taking upwards, will have good Dharana.

Those who can practise concentration evolve quickly. They can do any work with scientific accuracy and great efficiency. What others do in six hours can be done by one who has concentration within half an hour. What others can read in six hours, can be read by one who has concentration within half an hour. Concentration purifies and calms the surging emotions, strengthens the current of thought and clarifies the ideas. Concentration helps a man in his material progress also. He will have a very good outturn of work in his office or business-house. What was cloudy and hazy before becomes clear and definite. What

was difficult before becomes easy now and what was complex, bewildering and confusing before comes easily within the mental grasp. You can achieve anything through concentration. Nothing is impossible to a man who practises regular concentration. It is very difficult to practise concentration when one is hungry and when one is suffering from an acute disease. He who practises concentration will possess very good health and very clear mental vision.

Retire into a quiet room; sit in Padmasana. Close your eyes. See what happens when you concentrate on an apple. You may think of its colour, shape, size and its different parts such as skin, pulp, seeds, etc. You may think of the places (Australia or Kashmir) wherefrom it is imported. You may think of its acidic or sweet taste and its effects on the digestive system and blood. Through law of association, ideas of some other fruits also may try to enter. The mind may entertain some other extraneous ideas. It may begin to wander about. It may think of meeting a friend at the railway station at 4 p.m. It may think of purchasing a towel or a tin of tea and biscuits. It may ponder over some unpleasant happening that occurred the previous day. You must try to have a definite line of thought. There must not be any break in the line of thinking. You must not allow other thoughts which are not connected with the object on hand to enter. You will have to struggle hard to get success in this direction. The mind will try its level best to run in the old grooves and take its old familiar road or old beaten path. The attempt is somewhat like going uphill. You will rejoice when you get even some success in concentration. Just as laws of gravitation, cohesion, etc., operate in the physical plane, so also definite laws of thought, such as law of continuity, etc., operate in the mental plane or thought-world. Those who practise concentration should thoroughly understand these laws. When the mind thinks of an object, it may think of its qualities and its parts also. When it thinks of a cause, it may think of its effect also.

If you read with concentration the Bhagavad-Gita, the Ramayana, or the 11th Skandha of Bhagavata several times you will get new ideas each time. Through concentration you will get penetrative insight. Subtle esoteric meanings will flash out in the field of mental consciousness. You will understand the inner depths of philosophical significance. When you concentrate on any object do not wrestle with the mind. Avoid tension anywhere in the body or mind. Think gently of the object in a continuous manner. Do not allow the mind to wander away.

If emotions disturb you during concentration, do not mind them. They will pass away soon. If you try to drive them, you will have to tax your will-force. Have an indifferent attitude. The Vedantin uses the formulae: "I don't care. Get out. I am Sakshi (witness of the mental modifications)," to drive the emotions. The Bhakta simply prays and help comes from God.

Train the mind in concentration on various subjects, gross and subtle, and of various sizes, medium and big. In course of time a strong habit of concentration will be formed. The moment you sit for concentration the mood will come at once quite easily. When you read a book, you must read it with concentration. There is no use skipping over the pages in a hurried manner. Read one page in the Gita. Close the book. Concentrate on what you have read. Find out parallel lines in the Mahabharata, the Upanishads and the Bhagavata. Compare and contrast.

For a neophyte, the practice of concentration is disgusting and tiring in the beginning. He has to cut new grooves in the mind and brain. After some months, he will get interest in concentration. He will enjoy a new kind of happiness, the Concentration-Ananda. He will become restless if he fails to enjoy this new kind of happiness even for one day. Concentration is the only way to get rid of the worldly miseries and tribulations. Your only duty is to practise concentration. You have taken this physical body to practise concentration and through concentration to realise the Self. Charity, Rajasuya Yajna are nothing when compared to concentration. They are playthings only.

Through Vairagya, Pratyahara and practice of concentration, the dissipated rays of wandering mind are slowly collected. Through steady practice it is rendered one-pointed. How happy and strong is that Yogi, who has one-pointed mind! He can turn out voluminous work in the twinkling of an eye.

Those who practise concentration off and on will have only occasionally a steady mind. Sometimes the mind will begin to wander and will be quite unfit for application. You must have a mind that will obey you at all times sincerely and carry out all your commands in the best possible manner at any time. Steady and systematic practice of Raja Yoga will make the mind very obedient and faithful.

There are five Yoga-Bhumikas or stages of the mind viz., Kshipta (distracted), Mudha (dull), Vikshipta (slightly tossing), Ekagra (one-

pointed), Niruddha (controlled or well-restrained). By gradual and well-regulated practice of concentration daily, the rays of the wandering mind are collected. It becomes one-pointed. Eventually it is curbed properly. It comes under proper control.

If the aspirant pursues what is not fitting, his progress is painful and sluggish. He who pursues the right path gets easy progress and quick intuition. He who has no past conditions or Spiritual Samskaras of previous birth makes painful progress. One who has spiritual Samskaras makes easy progress. To one whose nature is actually corrupt and whose controlling faculties are weak, progress is painful and intuition is sluggish. But to one of keen controlling faculties, progress is rapid and intuition is quick. In one overcome by ignorance intuition is sluggish; in one not so overcome, intuition is rapid.

Exercises in Concentration

I. Ask your friend to show you some playing cards. Immediately after the exposure, describe the forms you have seen. Give the number, name, etc., such as king of clubs, ten of spades, queen of diamonds, jack of hearts, etc.

II. Read two or three pages of a book. Then close the book. Now attend to what you have read. Abandon all distracting thoughts. Focus your attention carefully. Allow the mind to associate, classify, group, combine and compare. You will get now a fund of knowledge and information on the subject. Mere skipping over the pages inadvertently is of no use. There are students who read a book within a few hours. If you ask them to reproduce some important points of the book, they will blink. If you attend to the subject on hand very carefully, you will receive clear, strong impression. If the impressions are strong, you will have very good memory.

III. Sit in your favourite meditative pose about one foot from a watch. Concentrate on the 'tik-tik' sound slowly. Whenever the mind runs, again and again try to hear the sound. Just see how long the mind can be fixed continuously on the sound.

IV. Sit again in your favourite Asana. Close your eyes. Close the ears with your thumbs or plug the ears with wax or cotton. Try to hear the Anahata sounds (mystic sounds). You will hear various kinds of sounds such as flute, violin, kettledrum, thunder-storm, conch, bells, the humming of a bee, etc. Try to hear the gross sounds first. Hear only

one kind of sound. If the mind runs, you can shift it from gross to subtle, or from subtle to gross. Generally you will hear sounds in your right ears. Occasionally you may hear in your left ear also. But try to stick to the sound of one ear. You will get one-pointedness of mind. This is an easy way to capture the mind, because it is enchanted by the sweet sound, just as a snake is hypnotised by the notes of the snake-charmer.

V. Keep a candle-flame in front of you and try to concentrate on the flame. When you are tired of doing this, close your eyes and try to visualise the flame. Do it for half a minute and increase the time to five or ten minutes according to your taste, temperament and capacity. You will see Rishis and Devatas, when you enter into deep concentration.

VI. In a lying posture, concentrate on the moon. Whenever the mind runs, again and again bring it back to the image of the moon. This exercise is very beneficial in the case of some persons having an emotional temperament.

VII. In the above manner, you can concentrate on any star you may single out from the millions of stars shining above your head.

VIII. Sit by the side of a river where you can hear a roaring sound like "OM." Concentrate on that sound as long as you like. This is very thrilling and inspiring.

IX. Lie on your bed in the open air and concentrate on the blue expansive sky above. Your mind will expand immediately. You will be elevated. The blue sky will remind you of the infinite nature of the Self.

X. Sit in a comfortable posture and concentrate on any one of the numerous abstract virtues such as mercy, compassion, etc. Dwell upon this virtue as long as you can.

Concentration on a Chair

The subject of concentration is disgusting and tiring for the neophyte. But it is the most interesting and beneficial science in the world. When one advances in concentration, when one takes real interest, when one has realised some benefits, he cannot leave the practice. He cannot remain even for a day without concentration. He becomes restless

when he fails to have the practice. Concentration brings supreme joy, inner spiritual strength, unalloyed felicity and infinite eternal peace. Concentration brings profound knowledge and deep inner sight, intuition and communion with God. It is a wonderful science in the three worlds. I cannot adequately describe its benefits.

Concentration on a chair really means getting full, detailed knowledge of the chair, its different parts, the particular wood out of which it is manufactured such as Devadaru, rose wood, etc., its workmanship, its durability, its cost price, the degree of comfort it gives for the back, arms, etc., whether the parts can be detached and fixed again, whether it is manufactured on modern lines and made bugproof, what sort of polish or varnish is used to make it durable, etc. When you concentrate on the chair, this sort of idea occupies your mind. Mind generally wanders wildly at random. When it thinks of one object, in a second it leaves that object and runs to another object like a monkey, then to a third object and so on. It cannot stick to one point.

When the thought runs in one definite groove continuously on one subject alone like the flow of oil from one vessel to another, then it is concentration. The aspirant should withdraw his mind whenever it runs outside and put it in the same groove in the same line of thought on one subject and on one idea. This is spiritual Sadhana. This is Dharana and Dhyana. This will result in Samadhi or the superconscious state, the fourth dimension or Turiya.

The vital point in concentration is to bring the mind to the same point of object again by limiting its movements in a small circle in the beginning. That is the main aim. A time will come when the mind will stick to one point alone. This is the fruit of your constant and protracted Sadhana. The joy is indescribable now. When you meditate on a chair, bring all thoughts connected with the chair and dwell on these ideas. Do not allow any other thought connected with another object to enter the mind. There should be one line of thought. There should be one continuity of thought like the steady flow of oil from one vessel to another vessel, like the continuous sound of a church-bell. There may be several ideas connected with one subject. This does not matter. You can reduce the number of ideas and come to one idea of one subject. When this one idea also dies you get the superconscious state or Samadhi. When there is one idea it is called Savikalpa Samadhi which is a lower stage. When this one idea also dies out and when there is not even a single idea, the mind becomes blank or void. There is mental vacuity. This is the stage of thoughtlessness of Patanjali

Maharshi in his Raja Yoga philosophy. You will have to rise above this blank Vritti and identify yourself with the Supreme Purusha or Brahman, the silent witness of the mind, who gives power and light to this mind. Then and then alone you can reach the highest goal of life.

When you concentrate on a chair, do not allow any other thought of different objects. Again and again bring the mind that wanders to the object which is chair. When you meditate on a rose, think of rose and rose alone. When you think of a book, think all that is connected with the book and nothing outside it. When you think of a radio or talkie, think of the radio or talkie alone. Exhaust all matters connected with the subject on hand. You can take any subject that is pleasing to the mind. Slowly you can take up any subject that is displeasing to the mind by creating interest in it again and again. You should always remember the maxim: "One thing at a time and that done well is a very good rule as many can tell." When you take up any work, apply your whole heart, full mind and sound to the work. Do it with perfect concentration. What another can do in six hours you can turn out within half an hour, smoothly and in a methodical and orderly manner. This is Yogic activity. You will be taken for an accomplished Yogi. Even when you study, study the subject with perfect concentration. Do not allow the mind to wander. You must shut out all external sounds. Fix the gaze at one point. Do not allow the eyes to wander. When you study one subject, do not think of a talkie or sweetmeats or a friend. The whole world must be dead to you for the time being. Such must be the nature of concentration. It will come to you after some steady and constant endeavours. Be not troubled. Be not discouraged. There will be some delay. Wait coolly and patiently. Rome was not built in a day. It is all a question of time. Do not leave the practice even for a day, even when you are sick. In your failure lies the secret of your success and in your weakness the secret of your strength. Plod on. Push on. Gird up your loins. Nil desperandum. Be bold. March on courageously. Be cheerful. A brilliant future is awaiting thee. Practise. Feel. Rejoice. Become a Yogi or a world-figure. I can make you one. Follow me. Be sincere and earnest. Rise up. Awake. Thy Light has come. O my dear children of Light and Immortality, Brahmanuhurta is dawning now. It is 3.30 a.m. This is the best time to practise concentration on Atman, memory and will-culture and to catch hold of the mind. Sit in Virasana and do rigorous practice now. May success and divine glory attend on thee. I shall take leave of you now. I shall leave you there. Melt the bubble mind in Brahman, the ocean of Knowledge, and enjoy Supreme Bliss.

Concentration on Anahata Sounds

Dharana is the intense and perfect concentration of the mind upon some interior or exterior object or sound like Anahata sounds, or any abstract idea, accompanied by complete abstraction (Pratyahara) from everything pertaining to the external universe or the world of senses.

Practise Sadhana

Sit in Padma or Siddha Asana. Practise Yoni Mudra by closing the ears with the thumbs. Hear the internal sound through the right ear. The sound which you hear will make you deaf to all external sounds. Having overcome all obstacles, you will enter the Turiya State within 15 days. In the beginning of your practice, you will hear many loud sounds. They gradually increase in pitch and are heard more and more subtly. You should try to distinguish sounds more and more subtle. You may change your concentration from the subtle to the gross, but you should not allow your mind to be diverted from them towards other objects.

The mind having at first concentrated itself on any one sound fixes firmly to that and is absorbed in it. The mind becoming insensible to the external impressions, becomes one with the sound as milk with water and then becomes rapidly absorbed in Chidakasa (the Akasa where Chit prevails). Being indifferent towards all objects, and having controlled the passions, you should, by continual practice, concentrate your attention upon the sound which destroys the mind. Having abandoned all thoughts and being freed from all actions, you should always concentrate your attention on the sound, and then your Chitta becomes absorbed in it. Just as the bee drinking the honey alone does not care for the odour, so the Chitta which is always absorbed in sound, does not long for sensual objects, as it is bound by the sweet smell of Nada and has abandoned its fitting nature. The serpent-Chitta through listening to the Nada is entirely absorbed in it, and becoming unconscious of everything, concentrates itself on the sound. The sound serves the purpose of a sharp goad to control the maddened elephant-Chitta-which roves in the pleasure-garden of the sensual objects.

It serves the purpose of a snare for binding the deer-Chitta. It also serves the purpose of a shore to the ocean-waves of Chitta. The sound proceeding from Pranava, which is Brahman, is of the nature of effulgence; the mind becomes absorbed in it; that is the Supreme Seat of Vishnu. The mind exists so long as there is sound, but with its cessation, there is that state termed Turiya. This sound is absorbed in

Brahman and the soundless state is the Supreme Seat. The mind which along with Prana has its Karmic affinities destroyed by the constant concentration upon Nada is absorbed in the unstained One. There is no doubt of it. Being freed from all states and all thoughts whatsoever, you will remain like one dead. You will become a Mukta. There is no doubt about this. The body is certainly like a log and does not feel heat or cold, joy or sorrow. When the spiritual sight becomes fixed without any object to be seen, when the Prana becomes still without any effort, and when the Chitta becomes firm without any support, you become a Brahman (Brahmavid-Brahmaiva Bhavati).

You may experience the tenth sound without the first nine sounds through the initiation of a Guru. In the first stage, the body becomes Chin-chini; in the second, there is the (Bhanjana) breaking or affecting in the body; in the third, there is the (Bhedana) piercing; in the fourth, the head shakes; in the fifth, the palate produces saliva; in the sixth, nectar is attained; in the seventh, the knowledge of the hidden things in the world arises; in the eighth, Paravak is heard; in the ninth, the body becomes invisible and the pure divine eye is developed; in the tenth, you attain the state of Para Brahman. When the Manas is destroyed, when virtues and sins are burnt away, you shine as the Effulgent, Immaculate, Eternal, Stainless, Suddha Brahman.

Trataka or Gazing

Trataka is steady gazing. Write the word OM in black on the wall. Sit in front of the drawing. Concentrate on it with open eyes till tears come in the eyes. Then close the eyes. Visualise the picture of OM. Then open the eyes and again gaze till lachrymation manifests. Gradually increase the period. There are students who can gaze for one hour. Trataka is one of the Shat-Kriyas (six exercises) in Hatha Yoga. Get an OM picture, fix it on the wall and concentrate on this. Pictures are sold in the bazaar. Trataka steadies the wandering mind and removes Vikshepa (tossing of mind). Instead of gazing on OM you may gaze at a big black dot on the wall. The walls will present a golden colour during Trataka. Or draw a big black dot on a white paper and fix it on the wall. This will be a target for the Yogic student to concentrate his mind upon. Gaze at this black dot on the paper.

You can do Trataka on any picture of the Lord either of Krishna, Rama or Siva or on Saligram. You can sit in the chair and gaze at the picture on the wall in front of your eyes. Trataka is the alphabet of

concentration. It is the first exercise for Yogic students in concentration.

Trataka with open eyes is followed by visualisation. Visualisation is calling up of a clear mental image of anything. Trataka and visualisation do help a lot in concentration.

The mind can also be rendered steady by doing Manasic Puja, by thinking the attributes of the Lord and by remembering His Lilas.

Practise Trataka for one minute on the first day. Then gradually increase the period every week. Do not strain the eyes. Do it gently with ease and comfort, as long as you can conveniently do. Repeat your Ishta Mantra, Hari Om, Sri Rama or Gayatri during Trataka. In some people who have weak capillaries, the eyes may become red. They need not be alarmed unnecessarily. The redness of the eyes will pass off quickly. Practise Trataka for six months. Then you can take up advanced lessons in concentration and meditation. Be regular and systematic in your Sadhana. If there is a break, take up the deficiency or loss on the next day. Trataka removes many eye-diseases and ultimately brings in Siddhis.